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The Harvest and the Labourers.

THE SERMON

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S E R M O N .

MATTHEW ix. 37, 38.

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few ; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

A MULTITUDE of the people of Israel, whom our Lord's miracles had brought together, were before him when he spake these words. “He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherds.” Shepherds, in name, they had abundantly. But Scribes and Pharisees and Priests, who made void the law and perverted all the Scriptures, by traditions of men that claimed an equal authority with the written Word, were no shepherds to break to the people the bread of life. The heart of Jesus was filled with compassion. His view embraced, not only that multitude, but all “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” scattered over all lands. It embraced all the Gentile world in its millions that were without hope and without God. Over all the vast surface of human want and spiritual darkness, not only of that generation, but of every future gen-

eration, his compassionate view extended. Then he spake, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

Twice were these words pronounced by the Lord Jesus, and in a connection which adds exceedingly to the force of their application to the duty of the Church in these days. He was just about to send out the first ministers of the Gospel Dispensation—the twelve Apostles. These words were the solemn introduction to that sending. Next, he sends the seventy disciples. These words were then the exhortation following that sending. In the first instance, they were addressed to his disciples in general; in the second, especially to the labourers sent; standing in this latter connection as a consequence of the work on which they were sent. It is written, "The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face," &c. "*Therefore* said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest," &c.

Thus we learn that the duty of laying to heart the need of labourers, and of taking measures, especially that of prayer, that more may be sent of God, is enjoined on all that profess the Gospel, of all conditions, since all can pray. We learn also that the duty is laid especially on the ministry. The fact that God has sent *them*, is made the reason why *they* should pray for the sending of more. Every new increase of God-sent labourers is motive and

encouragement and obligation to pray that greater still may be the company of the preachers.

This twice coupling of the *sending*, on the Lord's part, and the *praying* on our part, as if he would no more send without our prayers than the harvest can have labourers without his providing them, and all this so emphatically engraven on the first commission of the ministry, should impress us most deeply with the essential importance of the duty enjoined. We cannot doubt that what the Lord then said to his little flock, he now says from heaven, by the Spirit, to all his present Church. Is the harvest less great and plenteous in his sight, now that he looks down from the throne of his glory upon the millions and millions of this world who are as sheep having no shepherd? Is the compassion of his heart for such want and woe any the less since he died to save sinners, and ascended to make intercession for them? Will he any more separate his sending from our praying, now that there are so many who know the efficacy of prayer, through his intercession, than when once an upper room contained all his disciples? If the original charge, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," is as fresh and binding on the whole present Church as when first spoken by the Lord, how can we now hear it, without a most impressive view of the greatness of the work committed to the Church, or without feeling most painfully how few there are to do it; that all the hope of that work is in God; that the sending of the men is all with him, and the calling upon

him to send is all with us. So that side by side with the command to preach the Gospel to all people stands this command, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." The breadth and obligation of the one are the precise measure of the other. The same spirit that will make us earnest for the reaping of the whole field, should make us importunate in prayer for all the labourers whom the work requires. The man of prayer, at the throne of grace calling upon God for labourers according to his own will, is a labourer in the great harvest whose work may tell on all generations.

I. The first head of this discourse is the first clause of the text, "THE HARVEST TRULY IS PLENTEOUS."

We cannot doubt that these words are, at least, as true of the present state of the world as of that when they were spoken. A moment's glance at the countries nominally Christian in what we call the old world, and then at the vast regions therein of Mohammedan and Pagan darkness; a moment's glance at the new world, added to the harvest since these words were spoken; a single thought of the hundreds of millions in these two hemispheres, for whom Christ died, but who know him not, is quite enough to make us realize that the plenteousness of the harvest passeth knowledge.

In one aspect, the progress of Christian missions has only increased that plenteousness, because it has opened the great field in its vastness and its mil-

lions, in its degradation and necessity. It has brought it nearer to our view and reach, making its Satan-barred kingdoms the more accessible, and the obligation of the Church to enter and labour and reap so much the more imperative. And this suggests how wonderfully the workings of Providence, unceasingly working out the counsels of grace, are now, in this very day, laying open to our view the length and breadth and plenteousness of the field, and preparing for the entrance of the Gospel. What else, in Providence, and for what other end, is this astonishing revolution over the vast territories of China—a revolution of which history has scarcely the likeness; so sudden and rapid that it seems approaching its completion before we have had time to ascertain its beginning—a revolution, not only of dynasty, but of faith and worship, warring against all idol-temples, and exterminating their gods? We know but little yet of its probable results. Doubtless there is a great deal of heathen error and superstition, as well as of mere human ambition, in the movement. It would be wonderful, beyond degree, if it were not so. But one thing is known. The moral law of God is incorporated with it, almost in the words of the Bible. The Holy Scriptures are honoured as the Word of God. The name of Jesus, his sacrifice for sin, much of his history on earth, and his work for man, is known and taught. And, in all this, who that knows by what various instruments God works, can fail to see a wonderful putting forth of an unseen hand to prepare the way of the

Lord—a sudden and marvellous prostration of walls and barriers that hitherto have shut up almost hopelessly from Christian missions more than a fourth part of the people of the earth; yea, a prostration which not only opens wide the entrance, but in the special means that have wrought it, is a direct invitation to Protestant missions, and a direct prohibition of Romish missions, with their images and idolatries, to come in and labour? When the missionaries who translated the Scriptures into the language of China, and circulated a few humble tracts among its people, were striving to have faith as to what God would work by those feeble means, how little did they think that, before their generation would be ended, the teaching of those very Scriptures and tracts would be demolishing the idols of China, blazoned on the banners and incorporated with the movements of a revolution, the grandeur of which, as preparing the way of the Gospel, may not have its equal in the history of the world.

But look elsewhere. Just when God is thus laying open that immense division of the great harvest field, what means this wonderful increase of facilities by land and sea for communication with its people? why so great a reduction of the time and expense of our ships in getting there? Why is it that just now a great nation, with the Gospel institutions of our own land, is forming on the coast of the Pacific, abreast the shores of China—and another with the Gospel institutions of our mother land and mother church, is forming at another point still nearer those coasts? Why is it

that the two nations thus chosen in Providence to colonize those two regions, the most convenient as points of departure for missions in China, and drawn there by visible causes the most unanticipated, are the two which have preserved the doctrines of Christ and the institutions of his Church in the greatest purity and vigour; the two great Protestant nations in which, so much more than in any other, the spirit of Christian missions is vigorous and increasing? In all this, can we see no pillar of cloud going far ahead of the march of the Church, and standing over that great kingdom of darkness, as it stood upon the shores of the wilderness after the Red Sea had been divided, and saying to the Churches, "Come over and possess the land?" Who can consider these things, these eminent peculiarities of the times in which the Church of the present age is called to labour, and not feel, as no words can express, that "*the harvest truly is plentiful.*" But then comes the painful truth in the second clause of the text, and which will head the second division of our discourse.

II. THE LABOURERS ARE FEW.

It is the established ordinance of the kingdom of Christ in this world, that while nothing can be done in the subjugation of the nations but by the power of God, nothing will be done without the labour of man. There must be the human labourer. It is fixed in the essential law of this dispensation that none shall believe in him of whom they have not heard; and none can hear without a preacher; and that preacher must

be *man*. The field is the world. All growth of life therein must be from seed. The only seed is the Word. The only sower, man. Though God only giveth the increase.

But where are the men to do the work of so immense a harvest? Take the whole number of those who by official title are ministers of the Gospel, in all the world; subtract those whom by reason of essential error, or of ignorance, or of unfaithfulness and worldliness, the utmost charity cannot regard as labourers for God; and how many will be left for the home work and the foreign work of the ministry of Christ? "The labourers are few."

But let us take a narrower view and get nearer home. Let our own Church be the limit of our consideration. Take into view the prominence of its position on this continent; the wealth and influence committed of God to the stewardship of its people; the facility of its communications with the foreign missionary fields; then consider, as accurately as you can, what share in the work of preaching the Gospel to the millions of our own land, what proportion of the preaching of the Gospel to every creature, in all other lands, this Church is expected of God to take; then when you have thus seen what the Lord will have us, as a Church, to do, inquire how many are coming forward, year by year, in the spirit of devoted, self-sacrificing, faithful labourers, in the word and doctrine of Christ, not only to sustain what has been already accomplished, but to make new invasions, to plant new fields, to gather new accessions of minds and

hearts, *here at home*, to the salvation of God. Ah, it is a sad sight to see how few even for the home-work. But then we have the foreign harvest to think of. This Church is answerable for a large portion of that labour. It is not without some great purpose connected with the conversion of the world that the second nation in the world, as to extent of commercial intercourse with all the world, is ours. Nor is it of little importance in the estimate of what God expects of our Church for that work, in comparison with others, that so much of the wealth and enterprise and activity of that commercial intercourse is among its people. No—this Protestant Episcopal Church is answerable for a large share in the preaching of the Gospel to all people. But where are the preachers? How many are ready or preparing, in a ready mind, to go to that part of the field? Why is the mission to China so feeble in numbers, when God is so signally preparing the way for the missionary forces of the whole Christian Church to set up their banners in that empire? Why, when the unexplored depths of Africa are becoming so accessible, and every finger of Providence points the Church to that field, and the little that has been attempted has been so much blessed, why so few to offer themselves for the Saviour's ministry in Africa, whether it be of men ordained or unordained?

But we have not reached the most humiliating aspect of the fewness of the labourers within our own borders. They are so few who year by year come forth even to be by ordination ministers, not to speak

of the lesser number who become, in any true and effective sense, *God's labourers*, that we are now doing little more than making good the annual loss by death and discipline and withdrawal; we are finding the greatest difficulty in holding positions already taken, and not giving back to desolation fields we have begun to cultivate. We are growing fast in numbers by the natural increase of families; we are growing as fast in the ability of our Church, to exert a powerful influence for all spiritual good at home and abroad; we are growing in the numbers of our educated young men, possessed of all intellectual materials for the work; the population of the land is making prodigious strides of increase, occupying new and vast territories, and constantly making larger demands for more and more labourers; and yet not only are we falling far short of the duty thus coming on us, keeping no adequate pace with the increase of ability and of demand, but scarcely advancing in any sense in the supply of labourers. Was there ever a time since our present means of theological education were established, when the number of candidates for orders, in proportion to our churches, was less encouraging? when our vacant parishes, especially the feeble, the distant, the obscure, the places requiring self-denial, and having nothing of worldly attraction, were more difficult to be supplied? Who know and feel this so much as the Bishops, to whom those places are constantly looking for supply? What heavier burden comes upon the Bishops than the difficulty of answering their importunate supplications? "*The labourers are few.*"

But, brethren, there is an aspect of this matter which I must present. We all see it as a great *want* to be *lamented*. Do we see it enough as a great *sin* of our Church to be *repented* of? Does not the Lord who has placed our Church where it is, and endowed it with all that it has of Gospel truth and Apostolic institution, and stored it with minds and hearts and education, and all sorts of means of influence, does he not set down our deficiency to the account of our sin, and hold our Church as involved in the guilt of a great disobedience to the one great command which he has graven on its very corner-stone?

It was not so when the text was uttered, nor for a long time after. The labourers were few then, considering the greatness of the harvest; but they were very many, considering the number of the disciples and their means. The twelve and the seventy, and then they that went forth after the Ascension, were a very great company for so little a flock to furnish. Indeed the disciple and the labourer were synonymous terms in those days. The whole Church was life and light, and worked for God in every part, as in every part responsible for talents to be improved. The difference between ministers of the Word and other disciples was a difference of means and modes of labour, but none in the zeal and earnestness of all to labour. There was all the variety of members in the body; each with its appropriate office; but none without co-operating labour by each; all "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ," the Head of all, and all "striving together for the faith of the Gospel." When

the first persecution caused the first dispersion of the little household, "they went everywhere (it is written) preaching the Word." Those who could preach it officially did so. Those who could preach it only as every disciple is bound to preach it, by making it known as far as his abilities and circumstances admit, did so. The Church then was the poor widow casting her mite into the treasury of the temple. It was little; but it was all that she had. "*She hath done what she could,*" was her praise in heaven. The one talent was faithfully put out for the Lord of the harvest, and hence there came in return that wonderful ingathering by thousands and tens of thousands to the spiritual wealth of the Church, and as part thereof a great ingathering of labourers to go abroad into all nations; so that before the last of the original twelve had died a greater amount of work had been done in the world, more labourers had gone among its nations, more conquests had been made among the heathen, than the present Church has faith enough to believe to be possible with all her present resources and facilities.

But how much likeness is there between the spiritual condition of our Church and that of the Apostolic age? Are we doing what we can? Are we making any approximation to that mark? Is the spirit of labouring for Christ, each in his appropriate sphere, a sign of our present times? Do our lay-brethren realize that while the labours of the ministry are peculiar to a certain class of disciples, labour for Christ and the souls of men is the duty of all, and that it is

the working together of all, according to their several abilities, which fills the measure of our responsibility, and obtains blessing from God? Is there any reasonable proportion between the number of our working ministers in the home and the foreign field, and the resources and means and obligation of this Church to furnish them? Oh! let us indeed lament our deficiency as a great evil; but let us humble ourselves for it before God as a great Church-sin. Its root is the want of a vigorous, active, warm-hearted, pervasive love to Christ, and sense of the preciousness of his salvation, and zeal for the souls he has bought with his blood. That spirit more abroad in our Church, there would be more hearts eager for the ministry, and counting it a great privilege to be admitted into it. We have the primitive order. What we greatly need is the primitive spirit. We have the ten talents. What we have most to be concerned about is the increase which the Lord expects of them. Great reason have we to be thankful for a ministry and other Church institutions so conformed in outward order to those of the Apostles, and so much the more reason have we to be humbled before God, that with such privileges, we are doing so little of our share of the work of Christ's Church for the conversion of all men to his name.

And now, what is the remedy for the fewness of our labourers compared with our means and the harvest? I do not pretend, in the limits of this discourse, to give anything like a full answer to that question. It will be enough to answer it as

far as the strict keeping to the limits of the text shall lead me.

III. The third clause of the text is the head of our third division: "PRAY YE THE LORD OF THE HARVEST, THAT HE WILL SEND FORTH LABOURERS INTO HIS HARVEST."

The first lesson here is the absolute dependence of the Church on the Lord's *sending*; the utter impossibility of there being labourers such as He will approve for his harvest, except He doth send them. This the Church must feel, or she is not prepared to pray the prayer here enjoined of the Lord.

There is a wide difference between the Lord's sending and our ordaining. We are not authorized to ordain, except as we have reason to believe that the Lord has already chosen and called. Jesus called his disciples to the ministry before he commissioned them. "Ye," said he, "have not chosen me, but I have *chosen* you and *ordained* you."* He chose them when he met them at the Sea of Galilee, and said, "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" He ordained them afterwards, when he uttered the words of the text.

Much more must we acknowledge the need that the Lord should first choose, now that it is no more the Lord that ordains. We need no stronger declaration on this subject than the language of our Church. At the threshold of the ministry, before a single other word is permitted to be asked the candidate for ordination, she meets him with the preliminary question,

* John xv. 16.

“Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration?” In other words, Has God chosen you for this ministry? Has God sent you here to receive it? Divers motives may bring you hither to take on you this office. You may come under the inward moving of a mere professional spirit, of a perfectly worldly or selfish spirit. Are you inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost? Have you heard the voice of the Lord, in the movement of His Spirit on your heart, in your conscience, so that, while it is not a question that can be brought to any outward test, and must be answered exclusively by your own careful and solemn self-examination, you do trust, in the sight of God, that He has moved you to lay your hand upon the ark of his grace, and take on you this work?

Oh! is that first and essential question considered as it ought to be? Do candidates think of it long, and prayerfully, and earnestly, with strict examination of heart, as they are expected to do, before they take the place of candidates?

But what if a candidate, when asked that question, should answer, *“No: I have no reason to trust that I am moved by the Holy Ghost to take on me this office. I desire to enter the ministry; I have fulfilled all the requisitions in point of study, and order, and law. But that there is any necessity laid on me, any operation of the Holy Ghost on my heart and conscience moving me to it, I have no reason to suppose.”* What if such were his answer? Why, of course, the ordination does not proceed. His doctrine may be all

right, his knowledge all-sufficient, his morals exemplary; but he does not trust that God, by his Spirit, has particularly chosen him for this office, and therefore God's minister cannot ordain him to it.

But what if a person so uncalled of God should, nevertheless, ignorantly or deceitfully, respond to the question affirmatively, and so be ordained? what would he be? A minister? Certainly; but a minister made by the ministry of man only. His acts are those of a minister, and his responsibility at the Judgment is that of a minister; he has the same visible authority as others of like degree; but he is self-chosen, self-moved, self-called. He is not one of those whom we pray *the Lord of the harvest to send*. We might have a great company of such men coming forward every year and occupying our parishes; men of accomplishment, and of diligence, and of good deportment, carrying on in due regularity the external provisions of the Church. And thus our parishes might be so supplied that, in the outward appearance, the labourers would not be few in proportion to the home demand; and yet none of these would be such labourers as the Lord has commanded us to pray for, and therefore none of them such as the Lord might be expected to employ and bless as the builders of his spiritual Church, the ingatherers of his harvest. Self-moved, self-chosen, what better is to be expected than that the Lord would leave them to be self-guided, self-protected, self-sustained? Since they have sought the work which so pre-eminently depends on the teaching and helping of the Holy Ghost, unmoved by the Holy

Ghost, what is to be expected but that they will be allowed to go on with it, alike unmoved; left, for guidance into all truth, and for protection from all snares of mind and heart, to their own understanding and strength, self-inspired, self-encouraged, self-enlightened; and hence that out of them shall come, as is most natural, teachers of error, sowing seed which the Lord has not given, using means which the Lord does not approve, seeking fruit in which the Lord is not glorified?

We return to the great matter—the dependence of the Church on the Lord's sending; the impossibility that right men will come to be his labourers, except, by the moving of his Spirit inwardly on their hearts, he doth first choose and send them, to be afterwards outwardly and visibly called and commissioned by the authority vested in a visible ministry already commissioned. An essential preparation for the prayer enjoined is the sense of that dependence.

Brethren, is that dependence sufficiently felt among us? In the circumstances of the primitive Church, we easily perceive the need that whom the Lord would afterwards ordain, he should first himself choose and move to the work of his ministry. But is it not too much thought, that by change of circumstances, we are less dependent on the Lord's choosing; that since the ministry has become a profession, with its secular attractions to some extent, and Christian parents can, in a measure, move their children to the office, and our schools can prepare them, and our bishops can ordain them, and our parishes elect them, it is no longer

needed that the Lord, as he chose the sons of Zebedee from the sea of Galilee, and Matthew from the receipt of custom, should now by his Spirit speaking to this heart, and that, in this family, in that occupation, choose whom he will have for labourers, and whom we may ordain? In the plentifulness of our facilities for the training of young men, is there not a feeling of which we have great reason to be jealous, as if the Church, so differently situated from that of the Apostles' times, were now capable of seeing to the whole process of making her ministers, of choosing and calling and qualifying and sending, looking to the Lord only to seal in heaven what she has sealed on earth? Among the essentials for the office, is not that of the inward moving of the Holy Ghost, as the first step, far too little appreciated and inquired for? While we are justly providing that our ministers shall have the learning of books and schools, may we not be feeling far too little the need of that teaching which cometh only of the Lord's Spirit; forgetting how vast and impassable is the gulf between the best minister that we can make, with all our teaching and training and ordaining, and him whom the Lord, having first called, does also by his Spirit enlighten and sanctify in mind and heart?

But, my brethren, in all such defect of a right sense of dependence on God, must there not be great sin? And if it be ours, must we not be visited and chastened for it? If the Church attain such a spirit of self-reliance, that she practically takes the supply of the ministry into her own hands, and feels no great need

to call on the Lord to choose and send whom he will have for his harvest, what is to be expected but that He will punish our self-reliance, by leaving us to such ministers as the Church by her own means is able to make, and thus, to such light as such ministers can give, and such a spirit of piety as they can promote, and such a Gospel as they may be expected to teach, and finally to such corruptions as they may be expected to fall into.

It is not needful, after what has now been said, that I should speak much upon the duty and need of the prayer commanded in the text. We have no reason to expect the Lord to send forth labourers, except, in obedience to his own command, we pray Him to do so. Dearth of prayer will be here, as elsewhere, dearth of supply.

This prayer is for all, as all are alike interested in its answer. It is for the Church in her public assemblies and liturgy, and for families in their domestic worship, and for each disciple in his secret supplications. No one petition is made to stand out in the Scriptures so conspicuously, so specifically, deriving such emphasis from the circumstances in which it was enjoined, as this. Is necessity laid on the Church, as its great work, to preach the Gospel to every creature? Equal necessity is laid on it to be pervaded with the spirit of this prayer, calling on God to send labourers by whom that work may be done. And who that knows how much the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man avails, can doubt that, were the Church faithful in this, the Lord would supply her waste

places, and make her mighty for her whole work ? His answer would come in making the present ministry more successful in the conversion of sinners, that there might be more truly converted, zealous and devoted laymen, out of whom he might choose the greater supply of ordained labourers. His answer would come in moving many more hearts to seek service at the advanced outposts, in fields of the chief toil and self-denial where the helps of the world are fewest, and the need of faith is greatest ; it would come not only in the increase of God-sent labourers, as distinguished from those whom God does not send, but in the increased devotedness of the whole ministry ; we should have in our clergy a higher grade of spiritual attainment, and a more devoted, earnest zeal to do the work of Evangelists.

And now, with a glance at the encouragement for this prayer, derived from its earliest recorded answers, we will conclude our discourse.

Let us bear in mind, that before the Lord enjoined his disciples thus to pray for labourers to be sent, none had been sent. The twelve were following him, but had not been commissioned on his ministry. He sent forth none till he had first put his disciples to praying that labourers might be sent. First, the little flock must feel their dependence on God. Under that sense of dependence, they must call upon him ; and then He would send.

Now we cannot doubt that the disciples did all betake themselves to this prayer as soon as it was commanded. What next ? *Twelve* labourers, a large num-

ber for so few disciples to furnish, were soon sent to begin the preaching of Christ. We cannot avoid, if we have any faith, connecting that sending of the twelve with the previous praying of the disciples. It was simply an answer to the commanded prayer. The Lord gave what he had told them to ask.

But now that the twelve were sent, that prayer must have grown more importunate. It was now encouraged by the signal answer to its previous importunity. It grew with its own exercise. Every step of the twelve showed them the need of the sending of more.

Then, in a short time, we behold the seventy coming forth under the Lord's hand for his work. What a remarkable number for such a little band of believers to furnish! How many of our congregations and dioceses, with all our facilities and lights, would it require to furnish, at one time, seventy additional members of the Gospel? But whence came that great company of divinely-qualified labourers? The Lord sent them. But why? Whoever knows how, in the Lord's economy, prayer and blessing go together, must answer, He sent them because his disciples, according to his word, importunately prayed for them. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much to obtain such blessing!

But now the Lord a second time commands his disciples to pray for labourers. We must believe that with the new utterance of the command there was increased earnestness of the prayer. Such answers to it—first the twelve, then the seventy—would give the disciples new confidence in urging it still more.

But, as yet, the harvest-field had been confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; now it was made to take in all mankind. Before, it was, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles;" now it was, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The Lord was now ascended to the right hand of power, and the disciples were gone into the upper room in Jerusalem, where "they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," waiting the promise of the Father. And what must we believe they were praying for? Could they forget that last command—"Preach the Gospel to every creature"? Could they help amazement that to them such a work had been committed? Could they help looking abroad over the nations, and saying, one to another, "What are we among so many?" And think ye, as they conversed together in the heaviness of their hearts about that work, there was none of their company to bid them remember how the Lord, when there was not a single labourer, had bid them pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers; and how, when they prayed, he sent the twelve; and when they continued more and more to pray, he sent the seventy? And must we not believe that then, with one accord, they said, one to another, "Let not our hearts be troubled. We believe in God; let us believe also in Jesus, who is at the right hand of God, Head over all things to his Church. He can send the thousands as well as the seventy. We will hope in him, and call on his name." Are we, brethren, allowed to doubt that, during that continuance of prayer, in that upper room,

of that obedient, believing Church, there was a great importunity of supplication for this one thing—the sending of labourers into that great harvest just opened, to do that great work just commenced?

Then when the day of Pentecost was come, and the Spirit was poured out, and “a great multitude became obedient to the faith,” and such plenteous material of converted men was provided out of whom the Lord might choose his ministers, and when presently there came forth that great host, going every where, subduing nations, and bearing the lamp of life to the remotest region of darkness,—are we permitted to separate that great sending, under the power of God, from that humble, united, continuing prayerfulness of his infant Church? Would he put asunder what he had so recently and solemnly joined together? Was not the subsequent conversion and sending of the persecuting Saul his answer to the prayer of his Church for labourers? And is it not the same Lord that we must go to? and the same cause that we must go for? and the same prayer that we are importunately to use? If, when “the number of the disciples was about one hundred and twenty,” and the whole world was suddenly spread out as the field of their labour, they had faith to pray and trust the Lord for the needed workmen,—shall our hands hang down, and our hearts faint, and our prayers be without hope, when the disciples in the world are a multitude that cannot be numbered? Ah! what strength the Church of these days would have if, only in the spirit of prayer, it were like the Church of the Apostles’ days.

“Lord, teach us to pray!” Amen.

